



Online Estonian Church Records: Saaga

Estonia “How to” Guide, Beginner Level: Instruction

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GOAL

This guide will teach you how to use the website titled Saaga (ra.ee/dgs/explorer.php) to locate online Estonian church records.

INTRODUCTION

Saaga provides access to digitized records from the Estonian National Archives and Tallinn City Archives. It currently contains about 9 million digitized images, many of which are church records from various denominations. In this guide, you will learn how to access church records through Saaga. In this “How to” guide, the word congregation will be used for a parish (the location your ancestor attended church or registered their vital events) as that is the word that Saaga uses.

HOW TO

Translate to English

1. Go to ra.ee/dgs/explorer.php.
2. If the website appears in Estonian, click on the red **ENG** in the top right corner. This will translate the main page into English, but some sections of the site may still appear in Estonian.
3. When you come across Estonian language portions of the website, if using Google Chrome, right click anywhere on the page and then select the option, **Translate to English**. If you wish to use another browser, go to translate.google.com, change the settings to translate from Estonian to English, and paste in the URL: ra.ee/dgs/explorer.php and click on the link that appears in the English box. This will take you to a translated version of the site.

Register

In order to access records on Saaga, you'll first need to register for a free account.

1. In the top right corner of the page, click the red word, **Register**.
2. A form will appear. If it is in Estonian, click on the **ENG** on the upper right-hand corner of the page.

3. Fill out the form. Required fields are marked with a red asterisk (*). Upon registering, you will receive an email confirming the creation of your account. Be sure to check the Spam/Junk folder in your email in case the confirmation email ends up there. Click on the activation link in the email and sign in (using your email address and newly created password) to complete your Saaga registration.
4. From now on, to use the Saaga website, return to ra.ee/dgs/explorer.php and sign in by clicking **Log in** in the upper right-hand corner.

Accessing the Records

Keep in mind that the automated translations made possible through Google Translate may not always be correct. In some cases, you may want to change the language back to Estonian and use the following word list to help you determine record types.

Words to Know

EELC or EELK	Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Congregations
EAÕK	Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church
kogudus	congregation
Vallavalitsus	municipality
registratuur raamat	registry book
Elanike nimekirjad	residents listings
mõisa	manor
nimekiri	list
Vallaelanike	rural
praostkond	deanery
Meetrika raamatud	metrics books (church books)
Pastori kantselei	Pastor's Office
Kirikukantselei	church office
Kirikuraamatud ja nimistud	church books and lists
sünde	births
ristimisi	baptisms
abielu or Laulatatud	marriages
surmasid	deaths
matuseid	burials
Sünnimeetrika or Sündinute nimekirjad or <u>Sündinute nimekiri</u>	birth records
Abielumeetrika or Abiellunute nimekirjad or Abiellunute nimekiri	marriage records
Surnameetrika or Surnute nimekirjad or Surnute nimekiri	death records

1. After logging in to your account, you'll see a list of available record types on the left-hand side of the page.

2. To access church records, choose the first option, **Church Records**. Several options will appear:

- Lutheran church records kept in the public archives
- Lutheran church records kept in the EELC congregations
- Orthodox church records kept in the public archives
- Other confessions' church records kept in the public archives
- Koidula congregation in Siberia.

If your ancestor was Lutheran, you will want to check both the Lutheran records in the public archives as well as the EELC congregations. To learn more about each of these sections, see the headings and instructions below.

Lutheran church records kept in the public archives

1. Clicking on **Lutheran church records kept in the public archives** will bring you to a list of deaneries (Estonian: *praostkond*; Google may translate it as *parish*). If you know the deanery your ancestor belonged to, you can select it from the list; otherwise, select the first option: **All congregations in alphabetical order** which will allow you to browse all congregations (Estonian: *kogudus*).
2. After you have selected a congregation, a list of available records will appear. You may wish to use Google Translate or the table above to help you determine what records are available.
1. Once you have found a record set of interest, click on the blue, underlined hyperlink. This link will take you directly to the digitized book. For help, see the section, **Navigating the Digitized Book** in this "How to" Guide.

Lutheran church records kept in the EELC congregations

2. From the main church records page, select **Lutheran church records kept in the EELC** congregations.
3. A list of deaneries will appear. Choose a deanery, and then choose a congregation (Estonian: *kogudus*) from the list of results.
4. After you have selected a congregation, a list of available records will appear. You may wish to use Google Translate or the table above to help you determine what records are available.
5. Once you have found a record set of interest, click on the blue, underlined hyperlink. This link will take you directly to the digitized book. For help, see the section, **Navigating the Digitized Book** in this "How to" Guide.

Orthodox Church records kept in the public archives

1. From the main church records page, select **Orthodox Church records kept in the public archives**.
2. A list of deaneries will appear (Estonian: *praostkond*; Google may translate it as *parish*). If you know the deanery your ancestor belonged to, you can select it from the list, and from there find the congregation; otherwise; select the first option: **All congregations at once** (Estonian: *Kõik kogudused korraga*) which will allow you to browse all congregations at once.
3. After you have selected a parish/congregation, a list of available records will appear. You may wish to use Google Translate or the table above to help you determine what records are available. If you are interested in the church books, you may want to look at the *Kirikukantselei*, or church office option.
4. Once you have done this, you will most likely choose **Church Books and Inventories** (Estonian: *Kirikuraamatud ja nimistud*). If not, look for the words, metrical books, church books, births, baptisms, marriages, deaths, burials etc.
5. Once you have found a record set of interest, click on the blue, underlined hyperlink. This link will take you directly to the digitized book. For help, see the section, **Navigating the Digitized Book** in this "How to" Guide.

Other confessions' church records kept in the public archives

1. From the main church records page, select **Other confessions' church records kept in the public archives**. This will bring up various available records for confessions such as Evangelical, Baptist, Old Believer, Jewish, and Roman Catholic.
2. After choosing a congregation (religion type is often included in the title) look for **The Church Chancellery** (Estonian: *Kirikukantselei*) or **Church Books and Inventories** (Estonian: *Kirikuraamatud ja nimistud*). Or you, may be brought directly to record links. Look for the words, metrical books, church books, births, baptisms, marriages, deaths, burials etc. Use Google Translate or the table above to assist you.
3. Choose a record set you are interested in and once you click it, you will be directed to the digitized book. For help, see the section, **Navigating the Digitized Book** in this "How to" Guide.

Koidula congregation in Siberia

This collection contains fragments of a parish register from the Estonian congregation, Koidula, in Siberia.

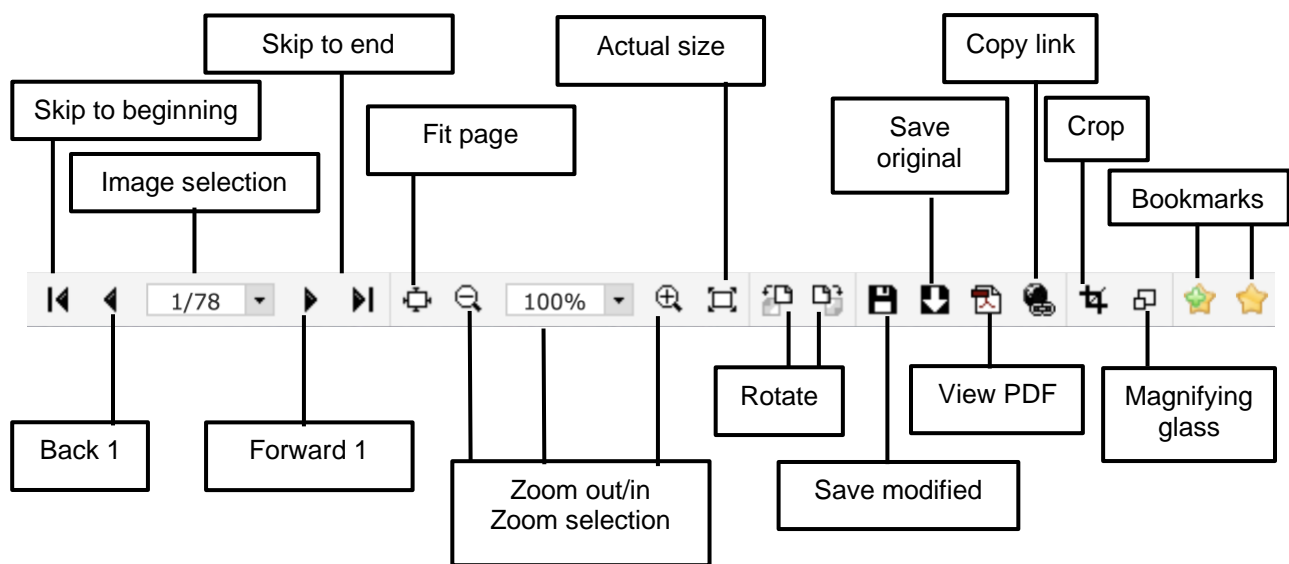
Personal Name Indexes of Registers of Parishioners

From the church records page, click on the hyperlink on the right for **Personal name indexes**

of registers of parishioners, found under the heading **Helpful Links**. This is an index of *personaalraamat*, which are personal books (family register). You can search using wild cards (see the description to the right of the search box for search rules), and by county, parish, or years. Entries will provide a direct link to the image by clicking on the blue hyperlinked number under the frame column. If there is no hyperlink, take note of the page number, and then click on the row in the entry and navigate to the page number.

Navigating the Digitized Book

Once you have chosen a record set, you will be taken directly to the online digitized book. To navigate the book, use the tool bar provided at the top of the page.



Further Information

Saaga has a great "Genealogy" page with information about record types, research methodology, etc. Find the article at: ra.ee/vau/index.php/en/page/article/index?menuId=16

Other records besides church record are available. See the full list from the main menu page at: ra.ee/dgs/explorer.php.

For help with Jewish research, please see: latvia.jewishgen.org/research/archival-resources/overview-estonian-resources

Be sure to also check online at FamilySearch.org in the "[Estonia Church Books, and Synagogue Registers, 1835-1940](#)". Many of these records are beginning to be indexed. Those that are not indexed are browseable by religion and then by locality.

PRACTICE

Together we will search for a few record sets.

1. We are looking for Baptist marriage records in Haapsalu for the year 1890.
 - Go to the ra.ee/dgs/explorer.php and log in.
 - Click on **Church Records**.
 - Select **Other confessions' church records kept in the public archives**.
 - Choose **Haapsalu baptistikogudus** or **Haapsalu Baptist Church**.
 - Click **Kirikuraamatud**, or **Church Books**.
 - Click on **Abielumeetrika** or **Marriage Metrics**. Note that the records available range from 1884-1926.
 - You'll be brought to the record viewing page.
 - 1890 is a bit closer in time to the beginning year of the record set – 1884, than the end of the record book. Start by navigating to image 10. These records are for 1890. Use the back arrow to jump back to image 9 where records for 1890 begin.
2. Look for Lutheran birth, marriage, and death records for Ruhnu in the Rootsi deanery.
 - Go to the ra.ee/dgs/explorer.php and log in.
 - Click on **Church Records**.
 - Choose **Lutheran church records kept in the public archives**. Keep in mind that when dealing with Lutheran church records, you should also go back and check the **Lutheran church records kept in the EELC congregations**.
 - Click on **All congregations in alphabetical order**.
 - Look **Rootsi praostkond** or Rootsi deanery.
 - Click on **EELK Ruhnu kogudus** or **EELK Ruhnu congregation**.
 - Then click on **Pastori kantselei** or the **Pastor's Office**.
 - Then select **Kirikuraamatud ja nimistud** or **Church books and inventories**.
 - Choose **Sünni-, abielu- ja surmameetrika** or **Metrics of birth, marriage and death**.
 - Note that within the collection, some are called **Meetrikaraamat** or Metric books (likely include birth, marriage, *and* death) while others are vital event specific, such as the **Surnute nimekiri** which contains only death records.

ACTIVITY

Now, test your skills you have learned in this “How to” Guide. The Activity is a way to check your knowledge and let you know you’ve mastered the Guide! [Click here to try out the Activity](#).

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